

Northward range extension for Littoral Rock Thrush *Monticola imerinus* in south-west Madagascar

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Extension vers le nord de l'aire de répartition du Merle de roche du sub-désert *Monticola imerinus* au sud-ouest de Madagascar. Le Merle de roche du sub-désert *Monticola imerinus* est une espèce endémique de la zone côtière du sud-ouest de Madagascar, mais aucune observation de l'espèce au nord du fleuve Onilahy n'a été confirmée. Nous présentons des photos de l'espèce prises à Salary Nord, étendant son aire de répartition originale de 120 km vers le nord.

Littoral Rock Thrush *Monticola imerinus* is one of two *Monticola* species endemic to Madagascar (Cruaud *et al.* 2011) and one of ten bird species entirely or largely restricted to the South Malagasy spiny forests Endemic Bird Area (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). A habitat specialist with a highly localised distribution, it occurs only in 'south western coastal bushland' (Moat & Smith 2007), a low-stature vegetation type growing on sandy soils and Tertiary limestone outcrops in the south-west of the island.

The northern limits of Littoral Rock Thrush's distribution are debated. Langrand (1990) states that it occurs as far north as Morombe but notes that the species is 'rather rare' north of Toliara; no geo-referenced records exist, however, from north of the Onilahy River (Raherilalao & Wilmé 2008). Further, it has been suggested that existing sight records from north of the Onilahy River (ZICOMA 1999, Gardner *et al.* 2009) might have been misidentified, as a specimen of Forest Rock Thrush *M. sharpei* has also been collected from this area (Cruaud *et al.* 2011). It therefore is unclear whether the species occurs along the 200 km of coastline between the Onilahy River and Morombe.

Here we present a photographic record of a male and female Littoral Rock Thrush from Salary Nord (22°33'12"S 43°17'31"E), a coastal location on the edge of Mikea National Park between Toliara and Morombe (Fig. 1). The birds were photographed within 50 m of the coast, on the edge of a clearing in thicket vegetation dominated by *Euphorbia stenoclada*, at 18.30 hrs on 29 December 2011. The birds can be clearly distinguished from Forest Rock Thrush by the relatively long, slightly curved bill and the extremely pale orange colour of the male's abdomen (Fig. 2). This record confirms the

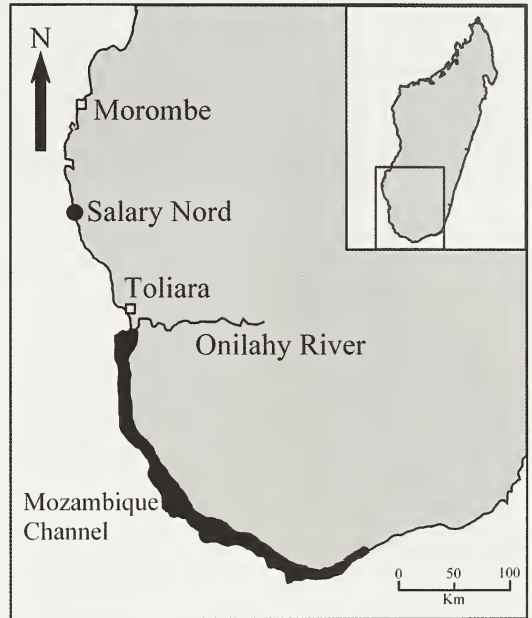


Figure 1. Map of southern Madagascar showing the record of Littoral Rock Thrush *Monticola imerinus* from Salary Nord (black dot), the approximate distribution of geo-referenced records following Raherilalao & Wilmé (2008) (black shading), and other locations mentioned in the text. The inset shows the location of the region within Madagascar.

Carte du sud de Madagascar indiquant l'observation du Merle de roche du sub-désert *Monticola imerinus* à Salary Nord (point noir), la distribution approximative des observations géo-référencées d'après Raherilalao & Wilmé (2008) (zone noire) et les autres localités mentionnées dans le texte. L'encart montre la localisation de la région à l'intérieur de Madagascar.

presence of Littoral Rock Thrush north of the Onilahy River, and extends its known range north by 120 km. It also represents the third distribution extension of range-restricted southern Madagascar



Figure 2. Male (left) and female (right) Littoral Rock Thrush *Monticola imerinus*, Salary Nord, south-west Madagascar, 29 December 2011 (Louise Jasper)

Merle de roche du sub-désert *Monticola imerinus* mâle (à gauche) et femelle, Salary Nord, Madagascar du sud-ouest, 29 décembre 2011 (Louise Jasper)

endemics from the Salary area within the last few years, following the recent observations of Appert's Tetraka *Xanthomixis apperti* (Langrand & von Bechtolsheim 2009) and Verreaux's Coua *Coua verreauxi* (Raselimanana *et al.* 2012).

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